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Program, 1992 February 29, A Celebration of the Life of Dr. Eva A. Jessye

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A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF



Dr. Eva A. Jessye

January 20, 1895 - February 21, 1992

February 29, 1992, 2:00 P.M.

First Presbyterian Church Of Ann Arbor

1432 Washtenaw Ave, Ann Arbor, MI

Interim Pastor, Bruce Ingles

Associate Pastor, Carl Gelder

MEMOIR

Dr. Eva Jessye was born in Coffeyville, KS, on January 20, 1895, and was educated in the public schools of Coffeyville and Iola. A 1914 graduate of Western University at Quindaro, she later was graduated from Langston University. After teaching in the public schools of Taft, Haskell, and Muskogee, OK, Dr. Jessye became director of music at Morgan College, Baltimore, in 1920. Leaving that position in 1925, she served for a time of the staff of the Baltimore Afro-American. She went to study under Will Marion Cook and music theorist Percy Goetschius. By the end of the decade, her Original Dixie Jubilee Singers, later renamed the Eva Jessye Choir, were popular performers on both stage and radio, appearing regularly on the Major Bowes Family Radio Hour and the General Motors Hour. Dr. Jessye is acknowledged as the first Black woman to win international distinction as a director of a professional choral group. She has appeared in numerous articles in major magazines and newspapers throughout America. The most recent honor was being selected to appear in Brian Lankers I DREAM A WORLD: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America. The Jessye Choir, with a repertoire encompassing spirituals, work songs, mountain ballads, ragtime jazz and light opera, performed throughout America and Europe and served as singers in numerous Broadway shows and musical motion pictures, the first being King Vidor's Hallelujah, produced by MGM in 1929. Dr. Jessye has appeared in Black Like Me and Slaves; other motion picture credits include Little Murders, Cotton Comes to Harlem, The Hot Rock, and The Confession of Joel Delaney. In 1934 Dr. Jessye was engaged as choral director of Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson's 4 Saints in 3 Acts. A year later she was chosen by George Gershwin to direct the chorus of Porgy and Bess. She was associated with virtually every professional production of this opera until 1958. Devoted to the cause of racial equality and understanding, Dr. Jessye participated in Martin Luther King's historic Civil Rights March in Washington in 1963, the Eva Jessye Choir being designated by Dr. King as the official choir. Dr. Jessye established the Eva Jessye Afro-American Music Collection at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and the Eva Jessye Collection at Pittsburg State University, Kansas. Dr. Jessye received numerous honorary degrees from leading colleges and universities throughout the country, including Wilberforce University, Allen University and Eastern Michigan University. She was a member of ASCAP, the Negro Actor's Guild, and Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority.

A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF

ORDER OF SERVICE

Organ Prelude.....Jean Snyder, Organist

Call To Worship.....John Fuller, Minister

Hymn....."How Firm A Foundation"
Page 425

Scripture and Prayer.....Jonathan Tice
II Timothy 4: 6-8

Selection....."Our Own Thing" Chorale
Directed by Prof. Willis Patterson

Reflections

Prof. Willis Patterson.....Associate Dean, School of Music
University of Michigan

Prof. Gene De Gruson.....Curator of Special Collections
Pittsburg State University

Flora Cherot

Prof. James Standifer.....Professor of Music
University of Michigan

Carol Tice

Selection....."Our Own Thing" Chorale

Homily.....John Fuller, Minister

Hymn....."For All The Saints"
Page 369

Benediction.....John Fuller, Minister

Organ Postlude.....Jean Snyder

Pallbearers

Herbert Wingo
Jon Lockhart
Shawn Martin

Earl Greene
Maurice Wheeler
Frederick McDonald

Ushers

Kelli Wingo
Flora Cherot
Mary Philpot

Rose Wingo
Cheryl Ervin
Adeline Thompson

Final Arrangements Entrusted to:
Lucille's Funeral Home
411 S. Adams St.
Ypsilanti, MI
Lanore Currie, Owner & Director

Acknowledgements

With sincere appreciation, we wish to thank you for your expressions of kindness. May God bless each of you.

MAKERS OF THE SPIRITUALS

*Makers of the spirituals--
A people washed marvelously with sorrow, swift to mirth:
Dawn was theirs, and sunset--all the colors of the earth.
The years gave them patience, anticipation,
Admiration for the prophets of old--and most of all--
Faith in God.*

Eva Jessye (September 1978)